

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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INFORMATION

January 20, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. KISSINGER

FROM:

ASHLEY C. HEWITT *AH*ON-FILE NSC
RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

SUBJECT:

DOS, NAVY,
JCS reviews
completedPossible Cuban Naval Transit of
Guantanamo Bay

Last weekend we received a [] report from the Naval Base at Guantanamo to the effect that during the course of this week, three Cuban vessels carrying 400 members of a Cuban Communist youth organization would transit the US-controlled portion of Guantanamo Bay en route to the Cuban port of Boqueron for an outing. According to the report, the vessels carrying the young people would be escorted by two Cuban naval craft described as "frigates" []

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The entry of Cuban naval craft into the waters controlled by the US would be in conflict with the 1903 lease agreement. The agreement does provide for the transit of Cuban vessels engaged in Cuban trade. Hence, the proposed transit of naval vessels described in the intelligence report would constitute a violation of the lease agreement by the Cubans, and perhaps a deliberate challenge to it. On the other hand, there would be obvious dangers and public relations costs to a confrontation between US naval forces and unarmed boats carrying young people, even if these were escorted by Cuban naval vessels. In some ways the report is reminiscent of the deliberate provocation carried out by the Cubans last October, when they flew in an unarmed transport plane and landed it in New Orleans in order to deliver an undocumented Cuban delegation to an international conference of sugar technicians. That incident was clearly a test of our isolation policy by Castro.

I was informed of this [] on Sunday and kept in touch with developments as State and Defense worked out a position on what action should be taken in the event it proved accurate. State and Defense agree that Cuban naval vessels entering waters controlled by the US under the lease agreement should be challenged and, if at all possible, turned away. Normal rules of engagement--fire if fired upon--would prevail. However, CINCLANT has issued strict instructions that weapons or weapons systems (including warning shots) are

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not to be fired at the Cuban forces without specific approval from the Joint Chiefs of Staff or higher authority (unless, of course, US forces are fired upon).

There has been no further indication [REDACTED] 25X1
of any Cuban attempt to penetrate Guantanamo Bay with naval vessels. A memo describing the original report and the action taken since is at Tab A.

Attachments:

Tab A - Memo from State

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